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LAIR

A HUGUENOT FAMILY

from near

LYONS, FRANCE

1752

Landed in New York
and settled in New Jersey

By
Alice L. Priest
16 Brewster Terrace
Brookline, Massachusetts
March 30, 1937

See "History of St. Peter's Church In Perth Amboy, New Jersey," by Rev. W. Northey Jones, M. A., the rector, published 1924. On page 274 begins the record of the Thomas Gordon Family, and includes the marriage of a descendant, Sarah Gordon, to David Lair. Also see "The King Family of Suffield, Connecticut," by King, 1908; page 183, for the daughter and granddaughter of the above David and Sarah (Gordon) Lair.

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LAIR

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16 Brewster Terrace
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March 20, 1937

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Lair

David Lair was born August 28, 1809 in Delaware township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey; the son of William Lair by his second wife, Ann Boss. October 2, 1831 in Hunterdon County, David Lair married his neighbor Sarah Gordon; and they continued in Delaware township until 1839, when they moved to Darke County, Ohio, and made that their home until about 1885, when they moved a few miles east to West Milton, Miami County, Ohio, where a son was living.

January 7, 1887 David Lair wrote an account, from memory, of the Lair family. A typewritten copy of this record was given in March 1937 to David Lair's grandson, Mr. Edgar Lincoln Kelly of Three Oaks, Michigan, formerly of the Mount Hermon Boys School, Gill, Massachusetts. Mr. Kelly loaned this typewritten copy to the compiler of these pages, and wrote of the copy that it was "what my Grandfather wrote up about the family from memory." The three sheets of typed account are as follows:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF WILLIAM LAIR, SR., WRITTEN FROM MEMORY BY THE LAST SURVIVING MEMBER OF HIS FAMILY

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William Lair, Sr., was born in 1750 near the city of Lyons in France. His father died soon after his birth and was buried in his native country. In 1752 his mother was forced to leave France on account of the great persecutions of the Protestants by the Romish church and came to America in order that she might worship God according to the precepts of the gospel.

She brought with her four children; William, the youngest, two years old, two daughters whose names have been forgotten as they died many years before the writer's birth, and the eldest, a son named Garret. After landing in New York, they went to New Jersey where they finally settled in what is now Delaware Township, Hunterdon County.

When he was five years old, William, the youngest son, went to live with a German named Casper Bear with whom he remained until he was twenty-one years old as his mother died when he was but seven years old. At the age of twenty-one William learned the carpenter's trade which he followed until he was twenty-three, when he married Elizabeth Boss, daughter of Godfrey and Elizabeth Boss who were also driven from France on account of their Protestant principles. In 1776 William joined the Revolutionary army and battled for his country's rights. How long he remained in the army the writer has at this distant date forgotten.

Garret was the father of several children and died about 1800. One of the sisters married a man named Compton and their descendants live in Sussex County, New Jersey. The other sister married an Englishman by the name of Myers, a rampant Tory of the Revolution. At the close of the War New Jersey became too warm for him and he emigrated to Pennsylvania where all traces of them were lost.

At the close of the War, William became a farmer which means of earning a livelihood he followed the remainder of his life.

William was the father of eleven children, nine by his first wife and two by his second wife. Two died in infancy; the rest are as follows:

Mary, the eldest, was born in 1776 and died in 1836 without children.

John was born in 1779, was married to Sarah Dils by whom he had three children, one son and two daughters, and died in 1854.

William, Jr., was born in 1782 and was married to Charlotte Heat by whom he had one daughter. His wife then died and he married Elizabeth Rittenhouse by whom he had eleven children, six sons and five daughters. He died in 1864.

Ann was born in 1784, was married to Ambrose Bonham by whom she had seven children, five sons and two daughters, and died in the town of Gordon, Darke County, Ohio, in 1874.

Garret was born in 1790, was married to Hester Rittenhouse by whom he had nine children, six sons and three daughters, and died in 1884.

Rebecca was born in 1795, was married to Pearson Robeson by whom she had nine children, seven sons and two daughters, and died in 1884.

Rec'd Jan 1-1979

David Lair was born August 29, 1800 in Delaware township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey; the son of William Lair by his second wife, Ann Hoge. October 8, 1828 in Hunterdon County, David Lair married his neighbor Sarah Gordon and they continued in Delaware township until 1839, when they moved to Darke County, Ohio, and made that their home until about 1883, when they moved a few miles west to West Milton, Miami County, Ohio, where a son was living.

January 7, 1897 David Lair wrote an account, from memory, of the Lair family. A typewritten copy of this record was given in March 1897 to David Lair's grandson, Mr. Edgar Lincoln Kelly of Three Oaks, Michigan, formerly of the Mount Herman Day School, Gill, Massachusetts. Mr. Kelly loaned this typewritten copy to the compiler of these pages, and wrote of the copy that it was "what my Grandfather wrote up about the family from memory." The three sheets of typed account are as follows:

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FROM MEMORY BY THE LAST SURVIVING MEMBER OF HIS FAMILY

William Lair, Sr., was born in 1750 near the city of Lyons in France. His father died soon after his birth and was buried in his native country. In 1768 his mother was forced to leave France on account of the great persecutions of the Protestants by the Roman church and came to America in order that she might worship God according to the precepts of the gospel.

She brought with her four children; William, the youngest, two years old, two daughters whose names have been forgotten as they died many years before the writer's birth, and the oldest, a son named Garret. After landing in New York, they went to New Jersey where they finally settled in what is now Delaware Township, Hunterdon County.

When he was five years old, William, the youngest son, went to live with a German named Casper Beer with whom he remained until he was twenty-one years old as his mother died when he was but seven years old. At the age of twenty-one William learned the carpenter's trade which he followed until he was twenty-three, when he married Elizabeth Bess, daughter of Godfrey and Elizabeth Bess who were also driven from France on account of their Protestant principles. In 1776 William joined the Revolutionary army and battled for his country's rights. How long he remained in the army the writer has at this distant date forgotten.

Garret was the father of several children and died about 1800. One of the sisters married a man named Compton and their descendants live in Sussex County, New Jersey. The other sister married an Englishman by the name of Hyers, a vehement Tory of the Revolution. At the close of the War New Jersey became too warm for him and he emigrated to Pennsylvania where all trace of them of them were lost.

At the close of the war, William became a farmer which means of earning a livelihood he followed the remainder of his life.

William was the father of eleven children, nine by his first wife and two by his second wife. The dates in history the rest are as follows:

Mary, the eldest, was born in 1776 and died in 1838 without children.

John was born in 1779, was married to Sarah Dile by whom he had three children, one son and two daughters, and died in 1854.

William, Jr., was born in 1782 and was married to Charlotte Hunt by whom he had one daughter. His wife died and he married Elizabeth Rittenhouse by whom he had eleven children, nine sons and five daughters. He died in 1864.

Rhu was born in 1784, was married to Andrew Sanders by whom she had seven children, five sons and two daughters, and died in the town of Gordon, Darke County, Ohio, in 1874.

Garret was born in 1790, was married to Hester Rittenhouse by whom he had nine children, six sons and three daughters, and died in 1864.

Rebecca was born in 1793, was married to Pearson Robeson by whom she had nine children, seven sons and two daughters, and died in 1884.

Joseph was born on Christmas day 1798, was married to Elizabeth Wirt by whom he had four children, three sons and one daughter.

In 1799 Elizabeth, his first wife, (William Lair, Sr.'s first wife) died and in 1802 he was married to Ann Boss, sister to his first wife by whom he had two children, one son and one daughter.

Sarah Lair was born in 1802, was married to Richard Rittenhouse and died in August, 1821, childless, and in two weeks and one day the writer's mother died.

David Lair, the last remaining one of the family, was born August 28, 1809. (Died March, 1906, at West Milton, aged 96 years, 6 months.)

In June, 1828, William, Sr. died.

On October 2, 1831, David Lair was married to Sarah Gordon. To them were born twelve children, six sons and six daughters, as follows.

Amy Lair was born March 19, 1833; William B. Lair was born April 10, 1836 and died August 18, 1852, aged sixteen years, four months and ten days; Philip G. Lair was born September 22, 1838 and died August 12, 1839; Elizabeth Ann Lair was born October 10, 1840; Henry H. Lair was born April 13, 1844, our eldest son now living; Sarah Lair was born June 6, 1846; Joseph Lair was born December 25, 1848, being our first and last Christmas gift of this kind; Winfield S. Lair was born May 15, 1852; William H. Lair was born August 24, 1854 and died September 26, aged one month and two days; Elvira Lair was born December 6, 1855; Laura Jane Lair was born January 17, 1857; Georgiana Lair was born May 29, 1859 and died August 31, 1859, aged three months and two days. Since that time they have scattered to various localities.

In the spring of 1839 David Lair with his family emigrated to Ohio. As there were no railroad facilities in those days they made the trip in wagons. They were 23½ days on the road, landing at Alexanderville on June 13th where they remained about two months. On August 16 they removed to Irwin Township, Darke County and settled on the land the town of Gordon now stands upon on the Dayton and Union Railroad.

The county at that time was almost a wilderness and it took almost Herculean labor to clear it up by log rolling and cabin raisings which were the important events of the day. Dayton was our nearest market town, being twenty miles distant, with nothing but mud and corduroy roads to travel on and nearly half the year it was impossible to travel at all.

In the fall of 1861 the eldest living son, Henry H. Lair, enlisted in the 48th Ohio Infantry; was wounded at the battle of Pittsburgh Landing and was discharged. After his recovery he enlisted in the 8th Ohio Cavalry where he remained until the close of the War. He was taken prisoner at Beverly, West Virginia, and for a time experienced the horrors and privations of Libby prison.

From heavy losses the aged couple became financially reduced and through ill health of his wife they abandoned housekeeping for something over two years when she, being somewhat restored, they bought property in West Milton and again commenced housekeeping on January 8, 1886, where they now reside at this writing, January 7, 1887.

In addition to the above copy of a very valuable Lair family record, Mr. Edgar Lincoln Kelly also enclosed two sheets of Lair family records given on stationery with the letter-heading of Mrs. J. W. Keck, 327 Willowood Drive, Dayton, Ohio. They are as follows:

Parents Births

David Lair was born August 28, 1809
Sarah Gordon Lair was born November 19, 1813

Births of Children

Amy Lair was born March 13, 1833
William B. Lair was born April 10, 1836
Philip G. Lair " " September 22, 1838
Elizabeth Lair " " October 10, 1840
Henry H. Lair " " April 13, 1844
Sarah Lair " " June 6, 1846

Joseph Lair was born December 25, 1848
W. S. Lair " " May 15, 1852
William Hatchet Lair was born August 24, 1854
Elvira Lair " " December 6, 1855
Laura Jane Lair " " January 17, 1857
Georganna Lair " " May 29, 1859

Deaths

Philip G. Lair August 12, 1859
William B. Lair August 18, 1852
William M. Lair September 26, 1854
Georganna Lair August 30, 1859

David Lair and Sarah Gordon were married October 2nd 1831
John Ullery and Amy Lair " " February 25, 1851 ("U" a little uncertain)
Daniel Coffman and Elizabeth A. Lair " August 25, 1859
Enos Kelly and Sarah Lair "
This is as far as he went with the marriages (Conclusion of above two sheets.)

Mr. David Lair's record is strongly supported by some printed New Jersey records; most of them, if not all so far, concerning Hunterdon County. In one case only do they make it practically sure that his memory erred: The given name of William Lair's first wife was Sarah, not Elizabeth. But Mr. David Lair's record rectifies a confusion of names in the New Jersey printed records where in the same volume they state that Sarah Boss and William Lair were given a marriage license in Hunterdon County on January 31, 1776 (this under the heading of female names given first); and in another place (under the heading of names of males given first), that William Lair and Sarah Ross were given a marriage license on January 31, 1776. These records are in New Jersey Archives, 1st series, volume XXII, "Marriage Rewords, 1665 - 1800." In these printed records both William Lair and Sarah Boss (and Sarah "Ross") are stated to be of Hunterdon County. Notice further that David Lair states that his father married sisters; that among the living children by the first wife there was no Sarah, but that the first child of the second wife was named Sarah. It was quite a customary courtesy in earlier times to name the first daughter of a second wife for the deceased first wife if the latter had left no living daughter named for her.

Mr. David Lair stated that the first child of his father, William Lair, was born in 1776; and the above marriage license was dated Jan. 31, 1776, and for Hunterdon county residents. It is interesting to note that this first child was named Mary, for it suggests the possibility that she was named for her paternal grandmother, the young Huguenot widow who came to America in 1752 and only lived until 1757. As the naming of the second child John suggests the possibility that it was for the child's paternal grandfather, since it was not for its father or his only brother, nor for the maternal grandfather. Mr. David Lair stated that the two wives of this William Lair, his father, were the daughters of Godfrey and Elizabeth Boss. An Index of Hunterdon County, New Jersey, Wills prior to 1901, as found in the office of the Secretary of State, was printed in 1913. This includes the 1805 Will and Invoice of Godfrey Boss of Hunterdon County. (2132 J). Also the 1791 Will of John Boss; the 1758 Will of Joseph Boss, Sr., and the 1805 Will and Invoice of another Joseph Boss, Sr.

Mr. David Lair stated that his father William Lair, Sr., died in June 1828. The above Index gives the 1829 Invoice of William Lair, Sr (3722J); the 1857 Invoice of another William Lair, Sr.; the 1867 Invoice of Garret Lair; and the names of sixteen other Lairs.

Another statement was that David Lair's brother Garret Lair was born in 1790 and married Hester Rittenhouse. A published "Marriage Record" for Hunterdon County, New Jersey, for the years 1795 to 1875, includes a total of thirty Lair marriages and thirteen "Lare" marriages; among them that of Garret Lair and Hester Rittenhouse on October 10, 1812. Also: Garret Lair and Salcy Little, Nov. 24, 1808; Garret Lair and Mrs. Ann Eliza Kritts, Dec. 15, 1854; Andrew Lair and Levina Boss, March 1810; Charity Lair and William Souden, Nov. 20, 1822; Jane Lair and John Webster, Jan. 20, 1838; John Lair and Lucinda Rittenhouse, Oct. 31, 1855; Sarah Ann Lair and Jacob Crouse, Sept. 30, 1837. - Among the Gordons were: Philip Gordon and Elizabeth

Hardin, Dec. 17, 1808 - the parents of David Lair's wife; and her sister, Amanda Gordon and Nelson McClane, Sept. 11, 1834. - There were a great many Boss marriages.

Another statement made by Mr. David Lair was that the Lairs lived in Delaware township, "Hunderton" County, New Jersey. (It seems possible that Mr. Lair gave the correct Hunterdon for the county, and that the error was an inadvertence of the typewritten copy made probably in 1937.) There is an 1881 History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, New Jersey, by Snell. It includes some account of Delaware Township, and states that its first town meeting was held April 9, 1838, at which meeting among the selected "Overseers of Roads" were Joseph Lair and John Lair. On page 377 is an account of Schools. The Locktown District (91) was formed and the schoolhouse built in 1804. The first trustees were William Lair, Capt. John Heath, and Richard Heath. The first teacher was William Heath. "The district lies in the northwest corner of the township." Page 379: Christian Church, Locktown. On Sunday, October 16, 1829 the First Christian Church began an organization, with part of the membership living in the townships of Amwell and Kingwood (if Kingwood was a township), taking in a district of from eight to fourteen miles. "A plot of ground was selected, and the owner, Joseph Lair, agreed to deed three-quarters of an acre in the southwest corner of his farm for that purpose" - the purpose of a building for their church organization. And the building seems to have been completed for the dedicating ceremonies on Oct. 13 and 14, 1832. Three trustees were elected, one for one year, Philip Gordon for two years, Elisha Rittenhouse for three years. Among the trustees for the period 1830 - 1840 were Philip Gordon, Esq., Jonathan Harden, David Lair: and their names do not appear after 1840.

Doubtless the Philip Gordon, Esq., was the father-in-law of David Lair of the 1887 Lair family paper. He may also have been the above church trustee; but we have no record to prove that there may not have been a relative also named David Lair who was the trustee. It seems possible that the trustee named Elisha Rittenhouse may have been related to the Hester Rittenhouse who married Garret Lair in 1812. And that the trustee named Jonathan Harden may have been the father or near relative of Elizabeth Harden, or Hardin, who married Philip Gordon.

An 1880 History of Darke County, Ohio, gives on page 624 a record of William L. Bonham, born Feb. 12, 1815 in Hunterdon County, New Jersey, the son of Ambrose and Ann Bonham, "natives of the same place." It states that "his father died in the place of his nativity, at the age of 81; after his death, his wife came to Ohio, and resided with a daughter till her death, which occurred at the advanced age of 86 years." This Ann Bonham was doubtless the half sister of David Lair, even though there is some discrepancy as to her age at the time of her death. The County History states that William L. Bonham married Elizabeth Rittenhouse July 1, 1837 and that she and her parents, David and Elizabeth Rittenhouse, were also natives of New Jersey. This marriage is given in the Hunterdon County, N. J., publication above. There were eight children, four of whom died young: Amy, 1838 - 1841; Harrison, 1840; Ann, 1842 - 1842; Sarah, 1844 (Mrs. Garret Hulse); Uriah, 1847; Andrew, 1849 - 1851; Susan, 1854 - 1854; Martha J., 1856 (Mrs. Carler). William L. Bonham emigrated from New Jersey to Montgomery County, Ohio, in 1838, and from there to Darke County, Ohio, in 1841.

Needless to state that the above Lair record could be made much more complete by an examination of deeds, wills, invoices, and complete records from publications.

A more compact outline of the births, marriages, and deaths included in the above is given on the next pages.

Lair: a Huguenot family from near the city of Lyons, France

- Lair, perhaps John, b. probably not before 1700, in France
  d. 1750 or 1751, near Lyons, France
  m. probably by about 1740, in France
- perhaps Mary, who in 1752 left the region of near Lyons, France, on account of religious persecution because she was a Protestant, and came to America with her four children, landing in New York, and settling in New Jersey.
  d. 1757, in New Jersey

Children, born in France, doubtless in or near Lyons:

Garret,[2] b. before 1750; d. about 1800 in New Jersey; m. and had several children.

Daughter, b. before 1750; d. before 1809; m. Compton in New Jersey, and later descendants lived in Sussex County, New Jersey, by 1887.

Daughter, b. before 1750; d. before 1809 probably in Pennsylvania; m. Myers, an Englishman, and a Tory during the Revolutionary War, which caused his removal to Pennsylvania after the ending of the war.

William, b. 1750, near Lyons, France; d. June, 1828, Delaware township, Hunterdon Co., New Jersey; m. (1) license, Jan. 31, 1776, Hunterdon Co., N. J. Sarah Boss; m. (2) 1802, New Jersey, Ann Boss, sister of first wife. 20025030

William[2] Lair (?John and Mary[1]), of Delaware township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey
  born, 1750, near city of Lyons, France
  died, June 1828, Delaware township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey
  married (1), license, January 31, 1776, Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Sarah Boss, daughter of Godfrey and Elizabeth Boss of Hunterdon County, New Jersey
  born,
  died, 1799, Delaware township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey
  He married (2), 1802, New Jersey

Ann Boss, daughter of Godfrey and Elizabeth Boss of Hunterdon County, New Jersey
  born,
  died, between August 15 and Sept. 16, 1821, Delaware township, Hunterdon Co., N. J.

Children, all born Hunterdon County, New Jersey, probably:

Mary,[3] b. 1776; d. 1836; m. no children

John, b. 1779; d. 1854; m. Sarah Dils (possibly Dilts?); one son & two daughters

William, b. 1782; d. 1864; m. (1) Charlotte Hout; m. (2) Elizabeth Rittenhouse; daughter by 1st wife, six sons and five daughters by 2nd wife.

Ann, b. 1784; d. 1874 or 1870, Gordon, Darke County, Ohio; m. Hunterdon Co., N. J., Ambrose Bonham of that county, their home during his life; five sons (one named William L.) and two daughters.

Garret, b. 1790; d. 1884; m. October 10, 1812, Hunterdon Co., N. J. Hester Rittenhouse; six sons and three daughters.

Rebecca, b. 1795; d. 1884; m. Pearson Robeson; seven sons and two daughters.

Joseph, b. Dec. 25, 1798; d. before 1887; m. Elizabeth Wirt; three sons & one daughter.

Sarah, b. 1802; d. August 1821; m. Richard Rittenhouse; no children.

David, b. August 28, 1809, Delaware twp., Hunterdon Co., N. J.; d. March 2 1906 West Milton, Miami Co., Ohio; m. October 2, 1831, Hunterdon Co., N. J., Sarah Gordon of Hunterdon Co., N. J.

(Two children by the first wife who died in their infancy not included in above.)

David[3] Lair (William,[2] Mary[1] (?), of Delaware twp., Hunterdon Co., N. J; to 1839
  born, August 23, 1809, Delaware township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey
  died, March 2 , 1906, West Milton, Miami County, Ohio
  married, October 2, 1831, Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Sarah[5] Gordon (Philip,[4] Franklin,[3] Thomas,[2] Thomas[1]) of Hunterdon County, New Jersey
  born, November 19, 1813, Hunterdon County, New Jersey
  died, about 1894, West Milton, Ohio

Children, born Hunterdon Co., N. J. to 1839; others Darke County, Ohio: